WE ALL BELONG TO A LARGER-THAN-LIFE STORY, OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS IN THE MAKING.

AS ALABAMIANS, OUR STORY IS BEING CRAFTED BY THE MOMENTS THAT BOTH DEFINE AND REFINE WHO WE ARE. A TIGHTLY WOVEN TAPESTRY OF TRIALS, TRIUMPHS AND TRANSFORMATIONS. THIS VIBRANT TALE CELEBRATES OUR COMMONALITIES AND HONORS OUR INDIVIDUALITIES. IT IS AN EPIC ADVENTURE, TWISTING ITS WAY THROUGH THE PEAKS AND VALLEYS OF THE PAST AND TAKING HOPEFUL TURNS FOR THE FUTURE. ITS PLOT IS STEEPED IN LITTLE-KNOWN SECRETS AND MONUMENTAL EVENTS FOREVER CARVED IN HISTORY. ITS SETTING SPANS EVERY COUNTY IN THE STATE AND FEATURES A FULL AND FASCINATING CAST OF LOCAL, UNSUNG HEROES AND WORLD-FAMOUS CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE. WELCOME TO THE UNPRECEDEEDENTED, UNABRIDGED AND OFTEN UNEXPECTED STORY OF MAKING ALABAMA, A BICENTENNIAL TRAVELING EXHIBIT.
From 2016 to the present, staff of the Alabama Humanities Foundation (AHF) have been responsible for creation of MAKING ALABAMA: A BICENTENNIAL TRAVELING EXHIBIT and all logistics associated with the exhibit’s tour to one venue in each of the state’s 67 counties. When we include venues like the Alabama State Capitol, Alabama Public Television headquarters, and the Alabama National Fair in Montgomery, we look at a total of 69 installations within 22 months in commemoration of 200 years of statehood.

When AHF’s Board of Directors voted in 2015 to undertake this major project on behalf of the people of Alabama and the state legislature’s Alabama Bicentennial Initiative, they believed that the project would both serve and be well-served by AHF’s mission – to foster learning, understanding, and appreciation of Alabama’s peoples, communities, and cultures.
AHF’s aims in undertaking the project, then, were to engage the organization in an unprecedented statewide effort – a project to physically take place in every one of Alabama’s 67 counties in collaboration with local communities – and to spread a message about the humanities’ usefulness in everyday life to people across Alabama. Bringing the humanities and AHF program resources to bear on this major initiative struck leadership as a unique opportunity to reach new audiences and cultivate relationships to benefit AHF and the state alike as Alabamians embark on another century of statehood.

AHF also sought to strengthen its relationships with the Alabama legislature and state government agencies. Having received little to no funding through appropriations in the state budget for some time, the Bicentennial exhibit project offered AHF a highly-visible project throughout which to serve the state and make both elected and appointed officials aware of the organization’s resources and potential to continue contributing to the health of the state beyond the Bicentennial.

Another aim of the project was to build capacity in local communities by applying lessons from the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program, which AHF has coordinated for over 25 years in Alabama, to Alabama’s Bicentennial. In the ways that it has inspired cultural innovation and cooperation in small towns across Alabama, the MoMS model seemed a recipe for success and a pathway to sustainability for the Bicentennial exhibit project.
Following the MoMS model, hosts responsible for MAKING ALABAMA’s visit to their counties receive encouragement, suggestions, and training from AHF, which leads them to take ownership of the project. That sense of ownership is expressed when hosts:

- Attend regional training workshops coordinated and led by AHF staff members;
- Coordinate complementary programming and exhibits;
- Write grant proposals to fund ancillary activities and/or buses for field trips across a county;
- Train others in how to prepare for the exhibit’s arrival, tenure, and departure from their county;
- Plan for, greet, unload from the truck, unpack, assemble, promote, monitor, maintain, and serve as docents for the exhibit;
- Organize school, church, club and other groups’ visits, often including transportation;
- Dissemble, pack, and load the exhibit onto a truck bound for the next county/venue.

In each exhibit venue, local persons step up and make use of – or develop new skills for making – connections between individuals and organizations to aid Bicentennial commemorations envisioned by their communities. Collectively, traveling exhibit hosts comprise a statewide MAKING ALABAMA network that AHF aims to see inspire and support one another beyond the life of the state’s three-year Bicentennial initiative.
To date, MAKING ALABAMA has been viewed by over 200,000 Alabama residents and visitors. With promotional support from the Alabama Bicentennial Commission and other partners on a state level and from every partner in each of the 67 counties, many more hundreds of thousands of Alabamians have been drawn into the MAKING ALABAMA community.

The project’s greatest public impact is gauged by the efforts it has inspired on local levels. Projects designed to complement MAKING ALABAMA’s visits are as varied as the counties in the state. In many communities, intergenerational cooperation is on display as youth assemble and elders serve as docents for the exhibit. Local history exhibits now exist in many communities’ libraries, courthouses, or town clerks’ offices; the Bicentennial exhibit visit made occasion for creating them and now they will be on display indefinitely. Other exhibit organizers sponsor children’s art contests, poetry readings, or Bicentennial book groups in conjunction with the exhibit’s visit. And five communities have requested to assume ownership of circulating copies of the interactive, tablet-based exhibit in order to build permanent local history museums around MAKING ALABAMA.
Partnerships with fellow statewide organizations – public agencies, private non-profits, and corporations – indicate public impact and were necessary to the development of the exhibit tour and cultivation of host committees. Partnerships include the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Department of Tourism and Travel, Encyclopedia of Alabama, Alabama Historical Commission, and Alabama Public Television.

Organizations with whom new partnerships were formed include the Alabama League of Municipalities and scores of chambers of commerce, libraries, civic groups, historical and genealogical societies, theaters, arts councils, and regional tourism offices across Alabama.
In addition to the traveling exhibit, AHF maintains a BICENTENNIAL SCHOLARS program – a “speakers’ bureau” to complement the exhibit tour, though it serves any community. Humanities scholars make presentations on topics related specifically to Alabama history and culture. AHF Bicentennial Scholars have visited nearly every county. In addition to elucidating topics found in the MAKING ALABAMA exhibit, the scholars represent colleges and universities statewide and their public presentations help raise Alabamians’ awareness of AHF’s perennial Road Scholars Speakers Bureau program.

Richard Bailey – Author of Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders During Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867 - 1878 (New South, 2010), Dr. Bailey is a lecturer on Alabama history, southern history, and contemporary issues.

Jonathan Bass – Author of Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight white religious leaders and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail (Louisiana State University, 2001), which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Dr. Bass lectures on Recent America and the South, Civil Rights, and Legal History.

Steven Brown – Author of John McKinley and the Antebellum Supreme Court: Circuit Riding in the Old Southwest (University of Alabama Press, 2012), Dr. Brown also curated the traveling exhibit, ALABAMA JUSTICE: CASES AND FACES THAT CHANGED A NATION with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

Mike Bunn – Author of Early Alabama: An Illustrated Guide to the Formative Years, 1798-1826 (University of Alabama Press, 2019) and other books, Bunn ‘s presentation, “Alabama: From Territory to State,” is a fast-moving and richly illustrated introduction to Alabama’s tumultuous founding era.

Valerie Pope Burnes – Author of Visions of the Black Belt: A Cultural Survey of the Heart of Alabama (University of Alabama Press, 2015), Dr. Burnes introduces audiences to the Black Belt region of Alabama, its towns, architecture, and panoply of farmers, craftspeople, cooks, writers, and musicians.

Bertis English – Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Africana Studies, Dr. English provides audiences perspectives on Alabama history and its Bicentennial from the point of view of a scholar of American political and social history.

Frances Osborn Robb – Author of Shot in Alabama: A History of Photography 1839-1941 and a List of Photographers (University of Alabama Press, 2017), Robb is known widely for her expertise in photograph identification and contextualization, which she offers audiences during lively presentation and discussion programs to which attendees are encouraged to bring their oldest family photographs.
MAKING ALABAMA – fabrication of six physical, circulating copies of the exhibit, their design, and the design and printing of ancillary materials accompanying exhibits to each location – was funded, exclusive of AHF staff time, by the Alabama State Legislature through an appropriation made to the Alabama Council on Higher Education and assigned to AHF. AHF was thus charged with fiscal and administrative management of the state’s official Bicentennial exhibit. A cost breakdown looks like this:

- Alabama exhibit design firm and Alabama fabricators — $500,000+
- Tabloid-style newsprint exhibit guides and their distribution — $300,000+
- Community grants to exhibit host committees/venues — $67,000
- Localized rack cards for promotion in each county — $10,000
- Localized pull-up banners for use in local venues — $15,000
- Web site; promotional events/TV/radio/print spots — $35,000

Additional support for the project comes from AAA Cooper Transportation, an Alabama-based freight company long a partner in AHF’s coordination of the Museum on Main Street program. Having transported MoMS exhibits statewide as a gift to AHF and host communities for over ten years, AAA Cooper committed the same services on a much larger scale for the Bicentennial. The company has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars of in-kind labor, truck space and fuel moving MAKING ALABAMA out of three locations and to another three locations, on average, every month since April 2017.
MAKING ALABAMA features original artwork depicting Alabama’s history in eight time periods. Interactive tablets engage visitors in reading about decisions and turning points that have shaped Alabama. Designed by Tatum Design of Homewood, Alabama, MAKING ALABAMA is designed to communicate that the Bicentennial is not about the past; it’s an occasion to inspire thoughts and feelings about Alabama’s future. Content partners for the exhibit are the Alabama Department of Archives and History, particularly its digital image collection, and the online Encyclopedia of Alabama, to which AHF holds copyright.

Alabama history’s eight periods of time are described in eight words. In order, the words are WONDER, CONFLICT, FEVER, CONVICTION, POWER, STRUGGLE, CHANGE, and HOPE.
MAKING ALABAMA: A BICENTENNIAL TRAVELING EXHIBITION is Alabama Humanities Foundation’s contribution to a three-year initiative commemorating two centuries of Alabama statehood. The project spreads a message about the humanities’ usefulness in everyday life to people in every one of the state’s 67 counties. Bringing the humanities and Alabama Humanities’ program resources to bear on a major statewide commemoration reaches new audiences, cultivates relationships, and encourages Alabamians to embark on a new century of statehood with questions about how we got to where we are today and how to see one another with hope for the future.

https://www.makingalabama.org/
Making Alabama. A Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit shared a photo.
May 25 -

Who's your favorite Alabamian? Here's what Joanne Weaver of Hoover had to say at Making Alabama: A Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit when it came to her community. She is standing in front of two of her favorites featured at the exhibit – William B. Bankhead and Rosa Parks. A retired history teacher with a doctorate earned at age 62, she shared her thoughts on people and places in Alabama for peopleofalabama as the state ready to turn 200.
ALABAMA WONDER, CONFLICT, FEVER, CONVICTION. Peace, Struggle, Change. Hope. Two centuries of Alabama history summed up in eight words. These concepts form a storytelling framework for the Alabama Humanities Foundation's traveling exhibit "Making Alabama," which is journeying to each of the state's 67 counties as part of Alabama's bicentennial celebration. The exhibit outlines a chronological, interactive exhibit detailing periods that have defined the state, its people, and a whole lot of interpretation. If they see that this followed this, which followed this, they can draw their own conclusions about why we face the challenges we do.

The exhibit serves some of the state's most famous people's stories, such as Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott, or country singer Hank Williams, who was born in Mount Olive. But it also includes some lesser-known stories, like that of Sopapuya, a Native American who created the Cherokee alphabet in the 1820s while living in Berlin, Germany, and when the black boxer and Alabama native Joe Louis knocked out German boxer Max Schmeling in June 1938, it meant more than just individual victory; it was triumph for the entire country.

"Making Alabama" is modeled on the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street, which sends ready-to-install exhibits to small communities across America and encourages each locality to add their own specific stories to their programming.

EXHIBIT CONTINUES IN FAYETTE COUNTY CENTRALLY SUBMITTED TO IDEA THAT WHILE THE EXHIBIT IS ON DISPLAY IN THE LIBRARY IN FEBRUARY. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HELPED INSTALL THE EXHIBIT AND FOURTH GRADERS DRESSED UP AS FAMOUS ALABAMANS SUCH AS ALEX HART, ABBY HUNTER, BROWN, AND AUTHOR AND ACTOR HUNTER HUNTER-ROBERTS TO PROVIDE AN EVEN MORE INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS. THE SCHOOL PRODUCED A LOCALLY THEMED EXHIBIT TO RUN ALONGSIDE "MAKING ALABAMA."" SPREADING PHOTOS FROM FAYETTE COUNTY'S HISTORY, THESE少数 TO BE GOOD OF ITS.

The exhibit continues in Fayette County centrally submitted to that idea while the exhibit was on display in its library in February. High school students helped install the exhibit and fourth graders dressed up as famous Alabamians such as Aiken Harper Eay, baseball player Hank Aaron, and author and actor Helen Hunter to provide an even more interactive experience for visitors. The school produced a locally themed exhibit to run alongside "Making Alabama." Spreading photos from Fayette County's history, these少数 to be good of its.

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"This exhibit contains a celebration of Making Alabama," says County Chairwoman Jenny Owen, who took home four gold medals from the 1956 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, and when the black boxer and Alabama native Joe Louis knocked out German boxer Max Schmeling in June 1938, it meant more than just individual victory; it was triumph for the entire country.

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Local students take part in "Making Alabama" throughout the week on campus. A third-grade student on a visit to the library came up with an artifact about a 19th-century Hispanic explorer Hernando de Soto. "He said to me, "I'm going to help. I'm a grandson of Hernando de Soto. I know all about him."" Nanavant remembers. "He started reenacting it. I asked him where he learned all that stuff. He said, "I read.""

Anderson says the hopes "Making Alabama" will teach Alabamians, like that of Aiken took pride, even more about their home state and want to learn more. Their climate is changing, and so is their perspective.

"We take a snapshot of one or three groups of people into ways of thinking, and somebody about the demographics people outside Alabama apply to."

The exhibit's first installation, "How, explores Alabama from the 1900s to the present, a time of segregation and recreation. It cites the 2005 and 2007 assassinations of the KKK, KKK, members responsible for the 1965 Voting Rights Act. A highl

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